

are going to continue to be a great Nation.

Now, let's look at what is happening here in Washington. I think one of the reasons why young people are going into the streets of this country is the fact that we have a Congress which is not only out of touch in terms of listening and responding to this, in fact, they want to take us backwards.

When I first came to Congress in 2007, a new Democratic majority moved swiftly to pass the College Cost Reduction Act, which was an effort to try to boost the Pell Grant program, which is the workhorse of higher education affordability, a program which basically had been level-funded for 6 prior years despite the fact that higher education costs had gone up 40 percent. We passed the College Cost Reduction Act which infused new funding into the Pell Grant program. We cut the interest rates for the Stafford student loan program from 6.4 percent to 3.2 percent, and we paid for every single penny of those expenditures by cutting the bank subsidies which were basically sucking Federal dollars away from families and students who need that critical help.

Last year we passed the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, again with a Democratic majority, which provides for a cap in terms of loan repayments of 15 percent of your discretionary income and excuses loan repayments after 25 years under the Stafford student loan program.

□ 1050

I was pleased that President Obama, again, just a month or so ago, acted to increase the benefit of that program by limiting the discretionary income payments to 10 percent of income and lowering the forgiveness date to 20 years, from 25 years. This is an administration which gets it. This is an administration that understands middle class families with children who want to improve themselves and compete in their futures need that kind of assistance.

What did this Republican Congress do? We had a Ryan budget last April which gutted and butchered the Pell Grant program and would take us back to 2008 levels. So, for example, in Connecticut, where I come from, the University of Connecticut would have seen its Pell Grant revenue from 2008, which was about \$8 million going into the University of Connecticut, it would have been cut from where it is today, which is \$12 million of annual Pell Grant revenue—a \$4 million cut to the University of Connecticut. And the grant level for students, the maximum award, would have been cut from \$4,500 a year down to roughly about \$3,000 a year. That is closing the doors of opportunity to millions of Americans. That's what the Ryan budget values and that's what its vision was at a time when, again, our country is in crisis in terms of needing skilled, qualified workers to deal with the future challenge.

The choice is clear. For those who care about spiraling education costs,

the Democratic agenda is the one that is on your side.

IT TAKES AN ACT OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOODALL. I'm happy to be down here this morning. I often come down here with something on my mind, Mr. Speaker. Invariably, one of my colleagues says something that inspires me even more than what I had on my mind when I came down. That's the case this morning.

My colleague who was here right before me said the value of higher education in terms of future earnings is undisputable. The value of higher education, Mr. Speaker, in terms of future earnings, is undisputable. And he then went on to talk about all the Federal programs that provide money so that people can seek higher education.

Now my question is, Mr. Speaker: If the value is undisputable, why do we have to pay people to do it? If the value is undisputable, why do we have to pay people to do it? That's what happens in this Chamber too often, Mr. Speaker.

I think back to 1787 and the passage of the Constitution. The Constitution, as conservative as it is in terms of preserving individual liberties, would not have passed, would not have been ratified, without the addition of the Bill of Rights. Our Founding Fathers were so concerned about a Federal Government trying to do too much that the colonies would not ratify the Constitution in the absence of the Bill of Rights—the Bill of Rights, which sole purpose is to protect individual liberties.

Mr. Speaker, as I look around at what makes America great, it's never something that comes out of this United States House of Representatives. It's something that comes out of a family next door back home. It's something that comes out of a community back home. It's something that comes out of individual liberty and freedom back home. And my job as the representative of 900,000 folks in the great State of Georgia is to protect their liberties from the natural inclination that exists in this body to think they have all the right answers.

We talk about higher education Mr. Speaker. In the great State of Georgia, we have what's called the HOPE Scholarship program. It's funded by lottery money. I would have voted against the lottery, but the lottery won anyway, and now it funds higher education for all Georgians. It's a huge job creation tool. Folks want to come and relocate their business to Georgia because they know kids with an accomplished high school record are going to be able to go to college for free.

That's a State initiative, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to pass a national lottery up here and try to provide free college education for everybody in the country. That's not the right answer. The right answer is to have States and

local communities exercise those freedoms and implement their ideas back home.

When I was growing up—and it didn't occur to me at the time, Mr. Speaker, how meaningful it would be—but there used to be a cliché that when something was really hard, you'd say: It takes an act of Congress to solve it. Have you heard that cliché, Mr. Speaker? It takes an act of Congress to solve that because the problem is so hard and it's hard to pass something in Congress. It's hard to get an act of Congress. And yet every time we make a mistake, Mr. Speaker, in the name of trying to do good, in the name of trying to have the best idea, in the name of trying to tell everybody in America if only they'll do what we tell them to do they will be happier, every time we make a mistake it literally takes an act of Congress to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, we're not in charge of providing happiness to America. We are in charge of preserving Americans' freedoms so that they can find their own happiness.

Mr. Speaker, there are lots of countries on this planet that do not share the freedoms that we have. There is only one country on this planet that protects individual liberty and freedom as we do. When we talk about the direction of America, Mr. Speaker, we have to decide are we going to protect those things that have always made this country great—individual liberty and individual freedom—or are we going to go the way of the rest of the world, which is looking to a central government that thinks it has all the right answers.

Mr. Speaker, they had it right in the summer of 1787. I hope we get it right here in this Congress.

IMPLEMENTING SMART SECURITY TO REPAIR A U.S.-PAKISTAN RELATIONSHIP IN CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, NATO airstrikes killed at least 24 Pakistani soldiers in a tragic "friendly fire" incident that has once again elevated tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan. Regardless of who was at fault—whether our forces were acting in self-defense or had legitimate reason to believe they were firing on insurgents—the Pakistan Government is furious and the bilateral relationship is facing a grave crisis.

Pakistan has said they are cutting off supply routes into Afghanistan. They have said they will no longer participate in a critically important international conference in Germany next week—a conference that will help chart Afghanistan's future. This episode is fanning flames of anti-American sentiment in a country whose people are already hostile. In the last few days, we've seen public demonstrations of

Pakistanis burning the U.S. flag and shouting, "Whoever is a friend of America is a traitor of the land." Clearly, Mr. Speaker, instead of winning the hearts and minds, we are giving terrorists a recruitment tool.

Pakistan has not always been the most reliable partner, but they are an ally—and let's not forget, a nuclear power—with whom we share important mutual interests. We need their cooperation if there is going to be political reconciliation and long-term stability in neighboring Afghanistan. This incident leads me to believe more strongly than ever that we must redeploy our troops out of Afghanistan. We have very difficult diplomatic work to do there—work that is being complicated, not facilitated, by our military presence.

After more than 10 years of failed war that is undermining our security interests, it's time to change our role in the region from one of military occupier to one of constructive partner. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the first places we could be implementing the SMART security strategy I've talked about so many times from this very spot.

While it's true that we send enormous amounts of foreign aid to Pakistan, the overwhelming majority of it goes to the military, with very little trickling down to the people. We could instead spend more to boost Pakistan's literacy rate, or more investment in key infrastructure projects, the growth of civil society, or life-changing humanitarian efforts.

□ 1100

To give one specific example, Pakistan is one of four countries on Earth—and Afghanistan is one of the others—that hasn't completely eradicated polio. For pennies on the dollar, compared to our military expenditures, we can help provide the vaccination that would eliminate this dire public threat. Perhaps then we'll be able to change the fact that only 11 percent of Pakistanis have a favorable view of the United States. Perhaps instead of destabilizing influences of 100,000 troops on the ground, we can build a stronger relationship based on mutual trust, one that promotes peace and empowers the Pakistani people with a humanitarian surge instead of a military surge.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for SMART Security, and it starts with bringing our troops home.

POVERTY AND HIV/AIDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, as a founding co-chair of both the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus and the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, I rise today to draw attention once again to the ongoing crisis of poverty in America. And, today, I also want to draw particular attention to the im-

pact of poverty on our national fight to stop HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, December 1 is World AIDS Day, and this year marks 30 years after the first discovery of AIDS cases. The United States and the HIV/AIDS community globally have made tremendous progress in our collective response to this domestic and global crisis. We have reduced the stigma surrounding the disease and strengthened education and outreach activities which continue to prevent millions of new cases of HIV worldwide. The scientific community has improved the treatment of HIV and AIDS with antiretrovirals and combination therapies, and recent breakthroughs have revolutionized the way we think about AIDS.

We have come a long way in our battle against AIDS. Contracting HIV no longer has to be a death sentence. But we have much more work to do. Not everyone who is HIV positive has access to these life-saving therapies. For the one in three Americans who are poor or near poor, HIV can still be the same death sentence that it was during the Reagan Presidency. Today, nearly one in five Americans with HIV do not even know their status, and only about half of Americans who do know their status are receiving the treatment that they need.

For the 100 million Americans either in poverty or living on the edge of poverty, much more must be done. Access to the drug cocktails, high-quality health care, housing, and healthy foods that are all critical for people living with HIV are out of reach for far too many.

Mr. Speaker, 30 years later, we continue to shortchange HIV efforts in poverty-stricken communities; we fail to fully include women in outreach education and treatment; and we lack the resources for communities of color. This is just simply unconscionable.

Women of color and young gay and bisexual men still receive the most severe burden of HIV in the United States. African Americans represent approximately 14 percent of the United States population, but accounted for an estimated 44 percent of new infections in 2009. And we know the numbers are on the rise in Latino communities and Asian Pacific American communities as well. These disproportionate rates of infection are not something that have happened in isolation. People of color continue to face higher rates of unemployment, incarceration, poverty and near poverty than their white counterparts. We can and we must do much better than this.

We must do more for those who are disproportionately impacted by HIV and AIDS, both here in America and around the world. We must provide the science-based, comprehensive sex education that is proven to reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. And we must grow past old fears and engage all community stakeholders to truly end the stigma surrounding the testing and treatment of

this disease. We must repeal laws that legalize and promote discrimination and hate. We must support and expand programs which provide critical support for people living with HIV and AIDS and immediately—mind you, immediately—extend treatment to the thousands of Americans on the waiting list for life-saving drugs.

And of course we must fully implement the national HIV/AIDS strategy and support Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. These policies are the critical next steps in our fight to stop this terrible disease. And we must protect the fraction of one percent the Federal budget directed to our global AIDS programs through PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

U.S. efforts are dramatically reducing the burden of HIV and AIDS in developing countries, and failing to support these programs would have dramatic national security and diplomatic implications for the United States—not to mention the humanitarian disaster that would occur. That is why last week I was very proud to be joined by over 100 Members of Congress in seeking appropriations of at least \$5.25 billion for the PEPFAR program and \$1.5 billion for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. And I will enter this letter into the RECORD.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to have played a role in overturning the unjust and ineffective HIV travel ban in 2008. And, now, for the very first time in 20 years, the International AIDS Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. in July of 2012.

So let me encourage every Member and their staff to engage with the leading researchers and doctors in the worldwide fight against HIV and AIDS. Our global leadership will never be more important than at this promising moment of reversal, when we could move forward or we could go backwards. So I hope every Member will join our bipartisan 60-plus members of the HIV/AIDS Caucus.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, November 21, 2011.

Hon. KAY GRANGER,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. NITA LOWEY,
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

Hon. LINDSEY GRAHAM
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on State/Foreign Operations, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN LEAHY AND GRANGER, AND RANKING MEMBERS GRAHAM AND LOWEY: As you begin negotiations on a final Fiscal Year 2012 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we write to respectfully request that you secure funding for bilateral and multilateral HIV/AIDS programs at the levels proposed in S.1601, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2012.

We urge support for \$7.9 billion for global health programs contained in the Senate